

Emergency Medications on the Bus

The number of students with life threatening allergies, asthma, seizure disorders and diabetes is on the rise. Some students may require the availability of emergency medications during the school day including during the bus ride to and from school. Developing an emergency plan should be a team effort and should be individualized to meet the needs of the student and setting. The school nurse should take the lead on planning how to safely meet the student's emergency health needs at school, after school and during transport.

Medication administration in public schools is guided by the Colorado Nurse Practice Act. A registered nurse may administer medication when it is prescribed by a provider with prescriptive authority and written parental permission is provided. The task of administering an emergency medication may be delegated to an unlicensed school staff member by the registered nurse. Only the registered nurse can determine whether it is safe and appropriate to delegate the task of emergency medication administration to unlicensed staff. (Guide to Delegation for Colorado School Nurses, 2015)

The school nurse should:

- Contact the child's healthcare provider to determine the appropriateness of the medication during the bus ride.
- Discuss the situation with parents, staff, transportation and administrators to strategize alternative ways of maintaining the safety of the student in an emergency.
- Include transportation considerations in the Emergency Action Plan if necessary. Information on any health issues should be available to the bus driver per federal and state rules.
- Arrange whether the medication will be carried by the student if appropriate or handed to the bus driver by the parent or school staff. It is recommended that students carrying their inhaler or epinephrine auto injector should also carry a copy of their action plan.
- Determine if certain medications, i.e. Diastat, must be available during the bus ride. Train and delegate to an appropriate aide who will accompany the student.
- Develop a communication plan (radio, phone, or pager) for activating emergency medical service (EMS). This should be in place for transportation of students with emergency health issues.

Any medication that requires that the student be physically exposed should only be administered in the presence of 2 adults and measures should be taken to provide privacy for the student. For example Diastat, which is an emergency anti-seizure medication, is administered rectally and would require delegation by the school nurse. The recommendation is that the student have specialized transportation and be accompanied by a trained and delegated aide.



The bus driver's primary responsibility is to drive the bus and ensure the safety of all students on the bus. If it is determined by the school nurse that the student requires a certain level of care during the bus ride in order to be safe, a delegated aide should accompany the student. When any emergency medication is administered, EMS (911) should be contacted immediately.

- Colorado State Board of Nursing (2012) *Colorado Nurse Practice Act 12-38-101 C.R.S.* Denver, CO: Department of Regulatory Agencies.
- Colorado State Board of Nursing (Adopted June 2010). *Rules and Regulations Regarding the Delegation of Nursing Tasks Chapter XIII, Sections 1 – 9.* Denver, CO: Department of Regulatory Agencies.
- Guide to Delegation for Colorado School Nurses (2015)
http://www.cde.state.co.us/HealthAndWellness/SNH_Legal.htm
- Schwab, N. & Gelfman, M., (2005) *Legal Issues In School Health: A Resource for School Administrators, School Attorneys, School Nurses.* New York: Authors Choice Press.

This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE's recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU's policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.

The contents of this handout were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

Colorado Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services Unit
(303) 866-6694 / www.cde.state.co.us/offices/exceptionalstudentservicesunit